EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Developing a Common Logistics Language
for the Global Marketplace
By
Tim Hoyle
Defense Logistics Information Service

The Defense Logistics Information Service (DLIS) located in Battle Creek, Michigan, has participated in the development of the global marketplace to supply the needs of that village. The challenge, of course, is to ensure that those attempting to trade with each other can fully understand what is being offered and accepted.

A major step closer to such communication came with the acceptance of smart codification by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATOs) Allied Committee 135. The committee has worked for many years to develop and refine a common language of logistics known as the NATO Codification System (NCS) and the committee's latest decision will share its techniques with global business.

"Helping to provide a smarter, more efficient way to identify items is part of the Defense Logistics Information Service's commitment to provide state-of-the-art logistics information support to the Department of Defense and also to the international community that we collaborate and work closely with on cataloging matters," said Richard Maison, DLIS's executive director and chair of Allied Committee 135. This NATO committee recently held its semi-annual meeting in Brasov, Romania, and took a significant step forward in making cataloging more efficient and effective, funding a key demonstration project referred to as smart codification.

By accepting standard elements of NCS into its commercial cataloging information, the Electronic Commerce Code Management Association has helped to create a new benchmark, ISO standard 22745. They have also refined the ECCMA Open Technical Dictionary (eOTD). The majority of the information in the dictionary is from the NCS and is available for general use without charge or restrictions on use.

What makes the resulting codification process so smart is the ability to use the eOTD to support a future functional capability that allows systems to seamlessly combine computer-aided design and product data management into a Standard for the Exchange of Product Model Data file that contains characteristic data encoded according to a standard catalog. The new STEP files will help suppliers characterize products accurately, consistently and efficiently at the source as an integral part of the design process, thus helping acquisition organizations more easily identify suitable products to meet their requirements. The smart codification prototype is scheduled for unveiling at the 10th International Symposium on Codification, to be conducted October 10-13, 2005 in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Besides preventing someone from obtaining the wrong item, the ability to use smart codification to catalog items at the source is expected to offer the following additional benefits through accurate, consistent and efficient characterization:

- Reduced codification costs;
- Reduced time to codify a product;

- Improved quality of the NCS catalogue entries;
- Increased inventory rationalization;
- Enhanced interoperability between the armed forces of different NATO countries;
- Improved availability of assets; and
- An open and competitive industrial supply base.

The initial capability will include the following:

- Enable the NCS participating nations to begin to reduce the costs of codification;
- Exploit and enhance the existing Smart Codification developments for the NCS; and
- Confirm that the eOTD tagged elements can be converted to NATO tagged elements.

As the U.S. National Codification Bureau, DLIS provides cataloging services on all matters related to international codification, serves as the U.S. representative to NATO codification panels and task groups, and provides codification and liaison services to U. S. activities for items produced by NATO member nations and to NATO countries and other allied nations on items produced in the United States. Through its annual NCH College, DLIS personnel share their codification expertise to assist allied nations in their establishment of NATO compliant cataloging systems.

A field activity of the Defense Logistics Agency, DLIS creates, obtains, manages and integrates data from a variety of sources. It shares this data through user-friendly products, systems and services that support logistics operations throughout the Defense Department, other federal agencies and elements of the private sector. DLIS' expertise in cataloging and information management makes it an important contributor to electronic commerce between the U.S. government and its many suppliers. For additional information on DLIS, visit www.dla.mil/dlis or call (877) 352-2255.

DLA provides supply support, and technical and logistics services to the U.S. military services and several federal civilian agencies. Headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, the agency is the one source for nearly every consumable item, whether for combat readiness, emergency preparedness or day-to-day operations. More information about DLA is available at www.dla.mil.